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RUEHAK/AMEMBASSY ANKARA PRIORITY 4266
RUEHLB/AMEMBASSY BEIRUT PRIORITY 3524
RUEHEG/AMEMBASSY CAIRO PRIORITY 1719
RUEHDM/AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS PRIORITY 4270
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 1107
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RUEHRB/AMEMBASSY RABAT PRIORITY 8139
RUEHRO/AMEMBASSY ROME PRIORITY 5615
RUEHRH/AMEMBASSY RIYADH PRIORITY 0528
RUEHTU/AMEMBASSY TUNIS PRIORITY 4649
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY 6601
RUEHJM/AMCONSUL JERUSALEM PRIORITY 9213
RHMFISS/CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL PRIORITY
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UNCLAS TEL AVIV 000518

SIPDIS

STATE FOR NEA, NEA/IPA, NEA/PPD

WHITE HOUSE FOR PRESS OFFICE, SIT ROOM
NSC FOR NEA STAFF

SECDEF WASHDC FOR USDP/ASD-PA/ASD-ISA
HQ USAF FOR XOXO
DA WASHDC FOR SASA
JOINT STAFF WASHDC FOR PA
CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL FOR POLAD/USIA ADVISOR
COMSOEUR VAIHINGEN GE FOR PAO/POLAD
COMSIXTHFLT FOR 019

JERUSALEM ALSO ICD
LONDON ALSO FOR HKANONA AND POL
PARIS ALSO FOR POL
ROME FOR MFO

SIPDIS
E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: OPRC KMDR IS

SUBJECT: ISRAEL MEDIA REACTION

SUBJECTS COVERED IN THIS REPORT:

Mideast

Key stories in the media:

The Jerusalem Post and other media reported that on Wednesday, a day after he met with Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, PM Ehud Olmert made clear during a session of the diplomatic-security

cabinet that only quiet in Sderot would bring quiet to Gaza. The Jerusalem Post said this is a clear indication that the current IDF operations are not intended to topple Hamas. Makor Rishon-Hatzofe reported that the cabinet instructed the IDF to bring Qassam fire to an end, while leading media reported that the cabinet ruled out an immediate ground operation in Gaza. Yediot quoted Attorney General Menachem Mazuz as telling the cabinet that bombarding civilians is a war crime. Vice PM Haim Ramon was reported to have said that the moment a rocket is launched, Israel will shoot back at the sources of fire, even if that area is inhabited. Maariv reported that the Foreign Ministry will hold simulations of a Gaza invasion.

Ha'aretz and other media reported that Israel will begin a diplomatic push for an agreement with Egypt on securing the Gaza-Sinai border and countering arms smuggling. Ha'aretz reported that the diplomatic-security cabinet instructed the foreign and defense ministries to step up contacts with Egypt on this issue. Israel Radio cited PA sources as saying that Egypt is working to achieve a tahdiya (truce). Speaking on the radio this morning, Amos Gilad, the head of the Defense Ministry's Diplomatic-Security Bureau, said that Israel was not negotiating with Hamas through Egypt. Yediot quoted Noam Shalit, Gilad Shalit's father, as saying that Israeli officials told him that private negotiations, for instance through French lawyers, will harm chances of obtaining his release.

Ha'aretz cited the belief of PM Olmert that negotiations with Syria should be seriously considered "if this would bring an end to its involvement in terrorism and extricate it from the axis of evil." Speaking at a briefing on the situation in the South to the Knesset's Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee on Monday, Olmert said that the Syrian leadership is aware of his position. On Wednesday Ha'aretz quoted IDF Intelligence as saying that Iran is arming Hizbulah with missiles sent via Turkey, in violation of UN Security Council Resolution 1701.

The Jerusalem Post, Yediot, and Israel Radio reported that President Bush has appointed career diplomat James Cunningham, currently U.S. Consul General in Hong Kong, as the next U.S. ambassador to Israel, pending Congressional approval. Yediot headlined: "U.S. Sends Psychologist to Israel." Maariv cited the disappointment of GOI sources in Jerusalem over Cunningham's appointment, quoting them as saying that this is a weak appointment of a person lacking diplomatic experience in the Middle East, who will be arriving at a critical time for Israel. While The Jerusalem Post said that the possibility that Ambassador Richard Jones will serve as U.S. ambassador to Russia has not materialized, Maariv reported that he will apparently serve there.

Ha'aretz quoted FM Tzipi Livni as saying on Wednesday at a joint conference with Secretary Rice that the Israeli and Palestinian teams are likely to meet today. Yediot headlined: "Following American Pressure: Abu Mazen Returns to Negotiations." Maariv also cited an agreement between Rice and Abbas to this effect. Ha'aretz quoted Secretary Rice as saying that Hamas was holding the people of Gaza hostage and was now "trying to make the path to a Palestinian state hostage to that. And we cannot permit that."

Major media reported that several illegal outposts will be evacuated in the next few days, under an agreement reached between the settlers and Defense Minister Ehud Barak.

Israel Radio reported that this morning an IDF soldier was killed and three others were wounded from the explosion along the Israel-Gaza border. Leading media reported that on Wednesday a Palestinian was killed and an Israeli civilian sustained moderate-to-serious injuries in a drive-by shooting in the village of Idna, west of Hebron. Some media reported that the Israeli was a car dealer about to sell a vehicle to Palestinians.

The Jerusalem Post and other media quoted the High Court of Justice as saying on Wednesday that it would hand down its decision on a petition protesting an army order barring Palestinian from driving on Highway 443 -- in the West Bank, parallel to the main Tel Aviv-Jerusalem highway -- at a later date. The Jerusalem Post reported that the court hinted that preventing travel by Palestinians on the road would prevent attacks on Israel. Makor Rishon-Hatzofe reported that on Wednesday the House of

Representatives passed a resolution condemning Palestinian rocket attacks. The Jerusalem Post: reported that on Tuesday the House of Representatives placed a hold on \$150 million in economic assistance to the PA until the State Department provides further clarification of how the money will be dispensed and until it has certified that a single treasury account for the funds has been created, among other requirements.

Maariv ran a feature about the average American's ignorance of world affairs. A teaser reads: "It is easier to send to war a nation that does not really know where Israel, Iran, and Iraq are."

Major media reported that Defense Minister Ehud Barak has not renewed the exemption of military service for around 1,000 students learning in new yeshivas. Maariv reported that the IDF has acknowledged that the lack of soldiers is due to exemptions granted to the ultra-Orthodox. Ha'aretz reported that the first edition of Yom Hadash, a free daily newspaper for the ultra-Orthodox community, appeared on Wednesday. Ha'aretz said that the publication reflects a leadership crisis in the ultra-Orthodox community.

Israel Radio reported that the Jordanian government is drawing up a law to make it possible to involve Israel in a regional cooperation start-up in the area of electricity supply, but that the Jordanian parliament is taking steps to torpedo the initiative.

Leading media reported that National Union MK Effie Eitam told Arab Knesset members, in the Knesset, on Wednesday that "one day we will expel you from this house, and from the national home of the Jewish people."

The Jerusalem Post cited a Gallup poll that found that 71% of Americans view Israel favorably. Israel was ranked fifth, slightly higher than India and France.

Mideast:

Summary:

Liberal op-ed writer Yael Paz-Melamed commented in the popular, pluralist Maariv: "For the foreseeable future, meaning months or years, no military solution will be found for the Qassam rocket problem, yet we are not willing to talk about other alternatives."

Veteran journalist and anchor Dan Margalit wrote on page one of the independent Israel Hayom: "There are indications that Hamas, which is anxious for a cease-fire, intends to present Israel with a Greek-style gift: It will cease its fire.... Olmert signaled on Wednesday that the lessons of the gift presented by the Greeks, in HomerQs Odyssey, are of no concern to him."

Middle East affairs commentator Dr. Guy Bechor, a lecturer at the Interdisciplinary Center, wrote in the mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot: "Here is an idea, which can be applied in conjunction with the existing IDF activity: Every time a rocket is fired at Israeli territory, Israel will respond against the population -- but never by lethal means."

The conservative, independent Jerusalem Post editorialized: " We do the Palestinians no favors by not demanding it of them, by ignoring the narrative of war, dismissing it as mere 'rhetoric,' or actually joining in blaming the failure to change narratives on Israel."

Former IDF spokesman Nachman Shai wrote in The Jerusalem Post: "After saying time and again that we don't want propaganda, we need to understand that there is no alternative to putting our positions forward -- and that's not necessarily 'propaganda.'"

Block Quotes:

II. "The Hot Winter of Illusions"

Liberal op-ed writer Yael Paz-Melamed commented in the popular, pluralist Maariv (3/6): "The truth is that For the foreseeable

future, meaning months or years, no military solution will be found for the Qassam rocket problem, yet we are not willing to talk about other alternatives.... The solution will arrive when Sderot is cloaked by some kind of defensive system, or when a hudna [truce] is reached with Hamas for five, ten or twenty years. Until then, the IDF and the Shin Bet will continue to wrack their brains about what to do. The IDF will enter and leave the Gaza Strip, arrest wanted men, assassinate murderers, clean up one area and move on to another, and the Qassam and Grad rockets will continue to fall and make the lives of the civilians impossible. Homes and the public buildings can be fortified, the support system for the 200,000 residents of the region can be made more efficient; but normal life is impossible.... Anyone who promises something different is throwing sand in the eyes, and preventing vital decisions being made by the residents on their future."

II. "A Trojan Horse Named Hudna"

Veteran journalist and anchor Dan Margalit wrote on page one of the independent Israel Hayom (3/6): "There are indications that Hamas, which is anxious for a cease-fire, intends to present Israel with a Greek-style gift: It will cease its fire. An unconditional gift, which Ehud Olmert already announced on Wednesday that he would accept, if it should reach him: 'If they do not fire at us from the Gaza Strip, we will not fire back.' This is precisely what Khaled Mashal and Ismail Haniyeh have proposed over the past months, and Israel wisely refused, because it wanted to prevent the Lebanonization of Gaza. It refused to give Hamas a year or two of calm to smuggle heavy rockets into the Gaza Strip and place them in an array that would endanger Israel.... If Olmert means what he says, then the Palestinians will be able to freely smuggle Grad rockets, advanced Katyusha and Fajr rockets, and threaten the coastal communities reaching up to Herzliya, while Israel will watch from the sidelines. No strikes against metal workshops for manufacturing Qassam rockets, no targeted killings against terrorist leaders and no surprise incursions. Quiet means quiet.... In the absence of a freeze in Hamas's military preparations, the IDF will continue its war -- with even greater energy, even though at a certain stage there may be no rocket fire at Israel. However, Olmert signaled on Wednesday that the lessons of the gift presented by the Greeks, in HomerQs Odyssey, are of no concern to him."

III. "No Need to Kill"

Middle East affairs commentator Dr. Guy Bechor, a lecturer at the Interdisciplinary Center, wrote in the mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot (3/6): "The IDF is capable of wiping out the entire Gaza Strip, but is barred from doing so since we simply cannot kill the civilian population.... Here is an idea, which can be applied in conjunction with the existing IDF activity: Every time a rocket is fired at Israeli territory, Israel will respond against the population -- but never by lethal means: Tear gas cannons will fire tear gas throughout the Gaza Strip, at increasing intervals; powerful loudspeakers will play terrible noises -- squealing, sirens, deafening explosions -- first for ten minutes, then for fifteen minutes, up to periods of hours.... In my assessment, after ten such days -- sleepless, with eyes burning from tear gas, with ringing in their ears and red paint -- the residents will bodily stop those who are firing rockets at Israel. This is what is special about the idea: The blame cannot be attached to Israel, since the one that will press the button each time and activate this series of harassments is Hamas itself, the moment it fires a rocket.

And if there are complaints around the world, well, the Israeli measures do not kill; these are accepted and known crowd control measures. Every launch, which is now carried out daily by the dozens, will cause a ceaseless disturbance and a blow to the Palestinian side. This way, Hamas will also divert the effect of the rockets towards its own public."

IV. "Narrative First"

The conservative, independent Jerusalem Post editorialized (3/6): "In case anyone might think that the PA is only remembering past 'glories,' Fatah, the faction that Abbas heads, issued a poster displaying a map of 'Palestine' that included all of Israel, a machine gun and a picture of Yasser Arafat. Incitement against Israel, including the glorification of 'martyrdom,' continues

through Abbas-controlled PA television, and PA educational institutions, such as schools and camps.... Abbas is not doing anything near what he could and should be doing. No one is forcing him to play so wholeheartedly into the Hamas propaganda machine.... What we should have learned by now is that the real peace process is not a diplomatic one, but one of each side preparing itself for peace. Israel has effected a sea change in this sphere, in that a consensus that held that a Palestinian state would necessarily be an existential threat has been transformed into a consensus that such a state is a strategic necessity. Such a transformation has barely begun on the Palestinian side. We do the Palestinians no favors by not demanding it of them, by ignoring the narrative of war, dismissing it as mere 'rhetoric,' or actually joining in blaming the failure to change narratives on Israel."

IV. "Hello to Public Diplomacy"

Former IDF spokesman Nachman Shai wrote in The Jerusalem Post (3/6): "We labor under the misconception that public diplomacy only involves speaking to the world at large, but that is not the case. We must also hold a dialogue with the Arabs, particularly with those alongside whom we live -- the Israeli Arabs, the Palestinians, the neighboring Arab states and even the more remote Muslim nations. At present, Israel does not possess communications media -- neither radio, nor television -- capable of transmitting the pictures and voices of Israel beyond a short range from our borders. The Foreign Ministry and the IDF Spokesperson have improved their treatment of Arab journalists stationed here, but with the lack of appropriate mass media tools in Israel, the skies above the Middle East are ruled by Arab satellites, their broadcasts reaching Europe and beyond. I'm not talking about propaganda. An independent, commercially funded communications network needs to be set up, broadly along the lines of Aljazeera-TV or Al-Arabiya-TV, capable of broadcasting to extensive audiences; and not affiliated with the Israeli government. However, after saying time and again that we don't want propaganda, we need to understand that there is no alternative to putting our positions forward -- and that's not necessarily 'propaganda.'"

JONES